

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 /084 W
-----035234 250558Z /21

P R 250440Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9050
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
CINCPAC
AMEMBASSY CAIRO

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 0258

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1, 4
TAGS: MOPS PINR LA UR
SUBJECT: MIG CRASH AND REPORTED AMBUSH OF SOVIETS IN LAOS

1. A LAO MAN LIVING IN A FISHING VILLAGE NEAR PHOU SE
(TF5572) HAS TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER THAT HE SAW A MIG 21
CRASH IN THE VICINITY ON FEBRUARY 21. HE SAID THAT IT
HAD JUST BEGUN A STEEP SUDDEN CLIMB, THAT THERE HAD
BEEN AN EXPLOSION, AND THAT THE PLANE HAD CRASHED. THE
SAME MAN LATER LED FOUR SOVIETS TO THE SITE, WHERE
LITTLE HAD REMAINED OF THE DOWNED PLANE. THE SOVIETS
REPORTEDLY TOLD THE MAN THAT THE PILOT HAD BEEN A LAO
TRAINED IN THE SOVIET UNION.

2. A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT REPORT OF THE CRASH FROM
A WESTERN SOURCE INDICATED THAT THE PILOT HAD BEEN A 41
YEAR OLD SOVIET WHOSE REMAINS WERE RETURNED TO THE
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SOVIET UNION ON FEBRUARY 24. THIS REPORT SAID THAT THE
TEAM OF SOVIETS HAD TRAVELED TO THE CRASH AREA BY HELI-
COPTER AND THAT THE HELICOPTER HAD RECEIVED HOSTILE
FIRE IN THE VICINITY OF THE CRASH SITE.

3. EARLIER IN THE WEEK WE RECEIVED A REPORT THAT,
BASED ON REMARKS OF A LAO PILOT, TWO MIG 21'S HAD

FAILED TO RETURN TO THEIR VIENTIANE AIRPORT BASE FEBRUARY 21 FROM A MISSION IN THE PHU BIA REGION. THE FRENCH EMBASSY RECEIVED A SIMILAR REPORT.

4. FRENCH AMBASSADOR ROGER DUZER TOLD US FEBRUARY 24 THAT TWO SOVIET MILITARY ADVISORS HAD BEEN KILLED IN AN AMBUSH NEAR PAKSE ON FEBRUARY 5.

5. A THIRD WORLD AMBASSADOR TOLD US RECENTLY THAT SOVIET GENERAL ANATOLI PAPOV VISITED LAOS FEBRUARY 20 TO 23. ACCORDING TO THE AMBASSADOR, PAPOV IS THE SENIOR SOVIET OFFICIAL FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA IN THE FIELD OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY. HE HAD PREVIOUSLY MADE FREQUENT VISITS TO EGYPT AS A COLONEL AND AS AN INTELLIGENCE TROUBLESHOOTER DURING THE SOVIET HEYDAY THERE.

6. COMMENT: WHILE DETAILS ARE NOT FIRMLY ESTABLISHED, IT APPEARS CERTAIN THAT A MIG DID CRASH ON FEBRUARY 21. THE AMBUSH-KILLING OF TWO SOVIETS EARLIER IN THE MONTH MAY HAVE BEEN CONNECTED WITH THE REPORTED VISIT OF PAPOV. ROBERTS

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